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ABSTRACT

This document presents the national plan for research and development (R&D) in adult education and literacy that was developed by the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL). The document begins by explaining the process used to develop the plan, which included conducting a literature review, obtaining input from a national steering group, and conducting 11 focus groups representing various stakeholders (adult learners, teachers, state and local administrators, and researchers). The plan's objectives, which are as follows, are listed: build on existing knowledge; consider the utility of research from other fields; support other research planning efforts; incorporate strategies for disseminating results to the field; allow researchers to locate research projects and describe specific projects' benefits within a national research framework; and provide potential funders with a list of priority areas in need of R&D. Presented next is the actual plan, which includes sections on the following topics: (1) adult learning, recruitment, and persistence; (2) types of instruction that work best; (3) learner assessment and program evaluation; (4) staff development; and (5) policy and structure. A model for linking research to improvements in policy and practice is described, and its implications are discussed. Lists of steering group members and focus group participants are appended. (MN)

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A National Plan for Research and Development In Adult Education and Literacy

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Most of the work that went into this Research Plan was carried out by the Research Triangle Institute (RTI), Center for Research in Education. Becky Hayward and Barbara Elliot, both of RTI, were primarily responsible for planning and implementing the activities that led to this publication. Their efforts included a review of previous research agenda-setting efforts for adult education, planning and carrying out a series of focus groups, and writing a report of their findings. This publication contains a great deal of the text from their original report, and we very much appreciate the high quality of their work.

We also would like to thank Judy Alamprese of Abt Associates Inc. for allowing us to include in this publication material from her work on setting priorities for research in adult education.

Finally, Lynn Reddy, Communications Director for the National Institute for Literacy, has contributed to this document by adding information that became available after the original work was completed by RTI, and by editing the overall report.

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INTRODUCTION

Under the National Literacy Act, Congress established the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) to:

A. Provide a national focal point for research, technical assistance and research dissemination, policy analysis, and program evaluation in the area of literacy; and

B. Facilitate a pooling of ideas and expertise across fragmented programs and research efforts (P.L. 102–73, Section 102).

The Act defines literacy as: "an individual's ability to read, write, and speak English, and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one's goals, and develop one's knowledge and potential."

In order to fulfill the part of its mandate relating to research, NIFL initiated an effort to establish a national agenda for research and development in the field of adult learning and literacy. Later, Harvard University was awarded a new grant from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to operate the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL). In its proposal, NCSALL had planned to create a research agenda to guide its own work. Subsequent discussions between NIFL and NCSALL led to the merging of the two efforts into a single agenda-setting activity. ED's Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL), which also administers national funds that support research and development, joined NIFL and NCSALL as a partner in this undertaking.

NIFL provided a contract to the Research Triangle Institute (RTI) to undertake a series of activities to support this effort. Those activities began with a literature review and included meetings of a National Steering Group of experts and focus groups with stakeholders (See Appendix A for National Steering Group members). Based on the outcomes of these activities, RTI drafted an agenda. Because of the importance of the issue, the directors of the three cooperating agencies together reviewed that draft to produce this document.

The process of developing the plan is described in the next section. The plan itself follows. Subsequent portions of this document make recommendations concerning the dissemination of results and the development of a research-to-practice model. The report concludes with an emphasis on the challenge of ensuring that research contributes to positive change.

ACTIVITIES

I. Literature Review. The first step in the process of establishing a national research plan was a review of similar efforts.[1] This review indicated that practitioners, administrators, and researchers believed that future research should:

Contribute to our understanding of adult learning and motivation, including:

- How adults learn;
- How their needs change throughout their lifetimes; and
- What motivates them to participate and persist in adult education and learning.

Identify the types of instruction (including the use of technology) that work best for adult literacy students in general and specific subgroups such as individuals with disabilities, students with limited proficiency in English, and low-level readers.

Investigate ways to establish an adult education service delivery structure that:

- Allows for better integration with other components of the educational system; and
- Permits easier transition among programs.

Design and test new approaches to staff development that respond to local contexts and involve practitioners in solving their own instructional problems.

Investigate issues in the area of learner assessment and program effectiveness, including:

- Specifying outcomes for adult education and learning;
- Identifying better techniques for assessing learner progress; and
- Developing improved methods for evaluating program effectiveness.

II. The National Steering Group Input. To provide overall direction for the agenda-setting process, the three agencies recruited a National Steering Group that included federal and state policymakers, practitioners, and members of the research community. As its first activity, the National Steering Group reviewed the summary of previous efforts to establish a research plan for the field and helped refine and finalize the topic areas that would serve as the basis for focus group discussions. The National Steering Group also recommended changes to the original design of the agenda-setting effort, which included expanding the number of focus groups to allow for greater input from stakeholders.

After the focus groups were completed, the National Steering Group reviewed detailed reports from each session, discussed the implications of focus groups' perspectives for the research plan, and provided NIFL with suggestions concerning the most urgent priorities for research. Those recommendations have been incorporated into this report.

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[1] MSPD Evaluation Support Center (1996). *Setting a National Agenda for Research and Development in Adult Education and Literacy.* Research Triangle Park, NC: Research Triangle Institute. Available on-line at **www.nifl.gov/nifl/research.html**

III. Focus Groups. Participants in the eleven focus groups represented the range of interested stakeholders. There were three focus groups of adult learners, three of teachers, two of local administrators, one of state directors and other officials, and two of researchers. The focus groups were held at five locations around the country and included individuals from both urban and rural areas, as well as a variety of services (See Appendix B for focus group sites and participating stakeholders).

The topics identified in the literature review (adult learning and motivation, types of instruction that work best, service delivery structure, staff development, and learner assessment and program effectiveness) served as a basis for focus group discussions. Most groups lasted for one and one-half to two hours, with participants discussing only those topics about which they were most likely to be knowledgeable. Sessions for state directors and researchers, however, extended to one-half day, with the researcher groups discussing all five topics. To provide participants in these longer sessions with a springboard for discussion, each individual was provided with a background paper that included a brief discussion of the current state of knowledge in the field.[2]

IV. Drafting of the Plan. RTI synthesized the input from the literature review, focus groups, and the National Steering Group, and produced a draft Plan. The Steering Group reviewed and commented on the draft Plan. The directors of the three cooperating agencies then discussed this draft and made changes to its format and wording. This plan was formed with input from every sector of the field and represents the three cooperating agencies' commitment to collaborate in seeking answers to these important questions.

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[2] Research Triangle Institute (1997). *Setting a National Agenda for Research and Development in Adult Education and Literacy: Overview of Focus Group Topics.* Research Triangle Park, NC. Available on-line at **www.nifl.gov/nifl/research.html**

Objectives of the Research Plan

The overall goal of the Plan is to focus research efforts on those questions that hold the greatest promise for improving and expanding services to adults who have low literacy skills, who do not speak English, or who do not have a high school diploma. These services are usually called Adult Basic Education (ABE), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and Adult Secondary Education (ASE).

The Plan can help to advance the state of knowledge and improve practice in the field of adult education and literacy in several ways. It will provide researchers at all levels, from those conducting nationally representative studies to individual practitioner-researchers, with information about the issues that stakeholders consider important. Guided by wide-ranging input, teacher-researchers, scholars, and policymakers then can identify the most urgent priorities for research. Investigators also will be able to see how their individual work contributes to answering broader questions, which should encourage more links and coordination among research efforts. Hopefully, the Plan will spur additional investment from the public and private sectors because there will be a clear consensus around the research questions.

The Plan itself forms a foundation for the development of an integrated, sequential agenda for addressing specific research questions in a logical sequence that:

Builds on existing knowledge and fills gaps in the current knowledge base;

Considers the utility of research from other fields (such as the K-12 and higher education systems, human development, and cognitive science) and from other countries to inform research on adult learning and literacy;

Supports other research planning efforts, particularly DAEL's Working Group of State Adult Education Directors, which established an agenda for ED's national programs,[3] and an adult ESOL agenda prepared by the National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy (NCLE) at the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL);[4]

Incorporates strategies for dissemination of research results to the field;

Allows researchers to locate research projects and describe the benefit of specific projects within a national research framework; and

Provides potential funders with a list of priority areas in need of research and development, and a rationale for their importance.

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[3] Alamprese, J (1998). *Linking Research and Evaluation to Policy and Practice in Adult Education: Final Report.* Bethesda: Abt Associates Inc. Available in print by calling Abt Associates at 617-520-2991.

[4] Van Duzer, C. (1998). *Research Agenda for Adult ESL.* Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy at the Center for Applied Linguistics. Available online at **http://www.cal.org/ncle/agenda/index.html**

The most suitable methodology for addressing a particular research question will vary depending on the topic, and work under this Plan will employ a variety of research methods. Some research will include nationally representative descriptive and evaluation studies, which will provide the data that federal and state policymakers need for decision making. Research activities will also encompass small-scale experimental studies that help explore causal relationships. Both professional scholars and teacher-researchers will undertake research, and ideally, these two groups will work together to ensure both quality and relevance of the research. No matter who undertakes the research or whether they use qualitative or quantitative methods, they should adhere to accepted conventions of good research practice.

In the design and implementation of their studies, researchers should consider the ultimate use of their findings. In a report to the ED, Judy Alamprese summarized input from the Working Group of State Adult Education Directors about how those who fund and carry out large-scale research and development projects could enhance the impact of their work on the actions of policymakers and practitioners.[5] The group stated that researchers should:

Build on prior work and identify that prior work in the framework of the study;

Assess to what extent a research question can be answered and whether it will provide useful information to policymakers, practitioners, and other researchers;

Test the research design before implementation;

Assess the availability and quality of the data that can be collected before determining the data collection procedure;

Articulate the relevance of the research to key programs and policy issues;

Adopt a consistent use of definitions and measures; and

Develop a stated dissemination process that takes into consideration the practitioners and policymakers who would benefit from the research and the ways in which research findings can best be communicated to them.

[5] Alamprese, J (1998). *Linking Research and Evaluation to Policy and Practice in Adult Education: Final Report.* Bethesda: Abt Associates Inc. Available in print by calling Abt Associates at 617–520–2991.

THE RESEARCH PLAN

The questions identified through the Plan setting process are listed under five topic areas. The questions are not technically research questions. Rather, they represent the questions that practitioners and policymakers consider the most important. Researchers may have to develop research questions to accompany each of the questions presented here.

A. Adult Learning, Recruitment, and Persistence

For programs to be successful, they must attract adults who are motivated to learn and help them persist until they meet their goals. In order to design programs that attract adult learners and help them meet their educational goals, adult educators need to know more about how adults learn, and what motivates them to enroll and persist in adult education programs. The questions under this topic are:

I. Adult Learning

- What is the current research-based knowledge about how adults learn and improve their literacy and English language skills?
- Which educational theories and instructional approaches/practices are consistent with this knowledge?
- What are the gaps in our knowledge base about the ways adults learn and improve literacy and English language skills, in both instructional situations and everyday life?
- How can we fill those gaps?

II. Recruitment and Persistence

- What makes an adult ready to learn at a particular point in time?
- Which recruitment strategies effectively identify and encourage students who are ready to learn?
- Do adults persist longer in programs where instruction relates to their specific goals, or where instruction focuses on a more general set of basic skills and knowledge?
- Which instructional components of a program contribute most to learner persistence?
- Which non-instructional components of a program (counseling, orientation, or peer support, for example) contribute most to learner persistence?
- How can adult education personnel help learners identify and manage the forces that act to support and inhibit the achievement of their educational goals?

B. Types of Instruction That Work Best

The answers to the research questions posed under the heading "Adult Learning, Recruitment, and Persistence" will help local adult education programs attract and retain adult students and provide those students with instructional services that are based on sound theories of adult learning. No single type of instruction, however, is appropriate for all adults under all conditions. Adult educators need information that will help them select the type of instruction most suitable for particular individuals and specific situations. The questions under this topic are:

- Are contextualized models that integrate basic skills and ESOL instruction with job training, parenting instruction, health, or other context-based instruction more effective than those that do not. With which populations are they more effective?
- How can practitioners make the best decisions about which instructional models and designs are most appropriate for specific groups of learners, including older adults, individuals with specific types of disabilities, and students for whom English is a second language?
- How do time-on-task, instructional intensity, and patterns of learner participation affect individual achievement?
- When should a teacher employ individual, group, and cooperative learning designs?
- How can technology be best used to improve instruction, increase learning time, and individualize instruction?
- Which instructional approaches lead to real change in home literacy practice and use of English in everyday life?

C. Learner Assessment and Program Evaluation

Adult learners need tools that allow them to track their progress toward academic and non-academic goals. Teachers need tools that inform instruction by providing an accurate picture of a student's strengths and weaknesses and the effectiveness of instruction, and by measuring academic progress. Program directors and state ABE directors need tools that measure program effectiveness in order to manage instruction, improve program quality, and inform policy decisions. In addition, the adult literacy system needs tools that can report both the achievement of adult learners and the positive impact upon their lives to policymakers, funders, and other stakeholders.

The first step in addressing these questions is agreement on a framework that defines the skills and knowledge programs should teach and the impact that should result from successful participation in these programs. The questions under this topic are:

- What is the impact of successful participation in an ABE, ESOL or ASE program on the lives of the adults who participate, on their families, and on their communities? How do the expectations of adult learners, adult educators, and policymakers/stakeholders regarding the outcomes of these educational services differ or converge?

- Which skills and knowledge that contribute to literacy can be validated and reliably measured?
- More specifically, which tools (existing or to be developed) can best assess achievement in reading, writing, mathematics, problem solving, learning to learn, and other learning outcomes?
- Which tools and methods (existing or to be developed) can best measure program impact beyond direct learning gains, such as employment, parenting, and community involvement?
- How can these tools be best employed to provide useful information to learners, teachers, program development efforts, and accountability systems?
- How can measurement tools be best incorporated into the operations of a program/classroom so they provide useful information to learners, teachers, program development efforts, and accountability systems?
- Which principles of effectiveness can serve as a basis for program evaluation and program certification? What would be the impact of a program certification system?

D. Staff Development

Teachers and other program staff are the most important part of the adult learning and literacy delivery system. The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (Title II of the Workforce Investment Act) requires every state to carry out a program of staff development. However, there is no clear articulation of the characteristics and abilities teachers should possess in order to be effective, nor is there agreement as to how teachers can best acquire the competencies they need. The questions under this topic are:

- What skills and knowledge are needed by all adult education personnel (including instructors, counselors, and administrators)?
- What additional skills and knowledge are needed by staff in particular types of programs or serving specific needs of students (e.g. , ESOL, learning disabilities, and math)?
- Which approaches to staff development are most effective in changing teacher practice? What is the relationship among staff development, teacher practice, and student outcomes?
- What would be the impact of a credentialing system for adult education instructors and administrators?
- Which models for statewide staff development systems are most effective in providing comprehensive, ongoing, systematic, and effective staff development to practitioners?

E. Policy and Structure

In deciding how to help students meet their educational goals, adult education programs are constrained to some degree by the structure of the service delivery system in which they operate and the policies that govern that system. These contexts determine, at least to some extent, which types of services local programs can offer, how intensive those services can be, how services will be coordinated with those offered by other agencies, and how readily students can move between adult education and other education or training programs. This section of the Research Plan addresses issues that go beyond the individual program to identify ways in which the delivery system as a whole can better respond to students' needs. The questions under this topic are:

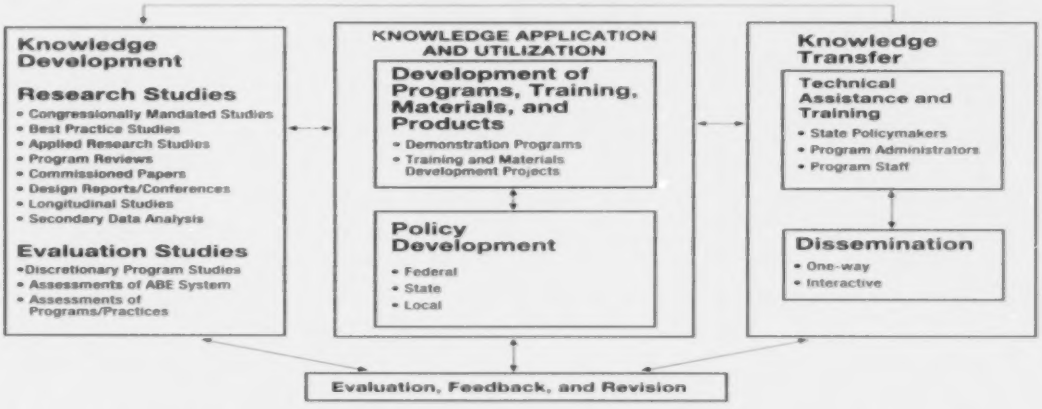
- Which state and local policies and structures appear to be effective in supporting quality instructional services?
- What are the skills and knowledge needed by policymakers at the state, local, and national levels in order for them to be effective in providing policy and instructional leadership?
- What are the barriers to, and benefits of, better coordination between adult education programs and other human service agencies, specifically the postsecondary education system, occupational training services, corrections system, and welfare agencies?
- What models do we have of policies that encourage and support coordination between programs and systems that support adults reaching their goals?
- How can the concept of a service delivery system be expanded to create opportunities for adults to learn outside of the classroom? For example, how can learning opportunities be extended through distance learning at the workplace?
- How should the size and nature of the potential adult learner population be assessed at the national level?
- What has been the impact of recent federal policy changes (e.g., welfare reform, and the "direct and equitable" and national reporting requirements of the Workforce Investment Act) on the adult education delivery system and the students it serves?
- What has been the impact of removing federal set-aside requirements in the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act on the students it serves?
- What has been the impact of national literacy assessments (e.g., the National Adult Literacy Survey and the International Adult Literacy Survey) on educational policymaking in the United States? How does this compare to the impact of similar assessments on policy in other industrialized nations? If there are differences, what accounts for them?

A Model for Linking Research to Improvements in Policy and Practice

Some research findings are useful because they lead to further research. Eventually, though, all adult literacy research must lead to improvements in practice or policy to be valuable. To create a strong relationship between research and practice would require both to become part of a larger system in which research, or knowledge development, is linked to knowledge application and utilization, including instructional activities, and also knowledge transfer. Such an integrated system does not exist yet, and we know from experience that creating it cannot be left to chance.

Revised Framework for Research, Development and Technical Assistance Priorities in Adult Education

Developed by Judy Alamprese



The diagram above, adapted from a report by Judy Alamprese, provides a more detailed picture of a research-to-practice knowledge system.[6] The diagram shows the dynamic relationships among the system's three major elements. Knowledge development, for instance, includes the process of conducting descriptive and evaluative research and establishing findings. Knowledge development both influences and is influenced by knowledge application and utilization efforts. It influences them at one stage by providing the content for training materials and demonstration programs that improve instruction and support policy development. At another stage, knowledge development is influenced by questions that emerge during application and utilization efforts based on prior findings. Questions and new information then may suggest the direction follow-on research should take.

Knowledge application and utilization efforts also inform knowledge transfer. Once research-based findings have become training, materials, programs, or policies, they can be readily shared among interested groups such as professional development specialists, administrators, practitioners, policymakers, and others. Again, the relationship between elements

[6] The diagram and the conceptual background this report draws on are found in Alamprese's 1998 report, *Linking Research and Evaluation to Policy and Practice in Adult Education: Final Report*. Bethesda. Abt Associates, Inc.

of the system works both ways.The information needs of interested groups helps shape the form of knowledge application and utilization activities. The groups' needs also may affect the knowledge development stage by providing researchers with information about the topics various audiences find interesting or important.

The ultimate value and impact of the system will be directly related to its design, funding, and implementation. Each element will have to be carefully thought out and effectively executed. For example, the success of the dissemination component will depend on several subsystems and processes. National, state, and local organizations will need to establish partnerships that ensure practitioners promptly receive research findings. The findings will have to be written up in ways that make clear to practitioners how the findings can be used. Staff development activities, supported by state policies on professional development, will need to reinforce the use of research-based information.

Implications of the Model

Faithfully implementing the Alamprese model would require significant changes in the practice and culture of the national, state, and local organizations that make up the adult literacy field. From the choice of research questions to the content and design of research products to staff development and evaluation, a consciously-developed research-to-practice system would challenge the status quo everywhere.

First, a new system would require a degree of communication, coordination, and cooperation that has often been lacking in the field. Many actors at the national, state, and local levels are currently responsible for carrying out some of the elements that would make up the proposed system. To ensure that all of the discrete elements would be properly linked, many organizations would have to work closely together on a regular basis. Each of these organizations would be held accountable for fulfilling their parts of the system.

Second, the agencies that currently fund research and utilization activities will need to coordinate their efforts, leverage the resources of other systems and stakeholders, and make strategic decisions about where to start in addressing the numerous research questions identified by this agenda-setting process. Adequate resources do not currently exist to carry out the research suggested in this document, not to mention developing and implementing the research-to-practice model. A collaborative approach holds the only promise for expanding the pool of resources required for this work.

Third, the field would need to encourage and support adult education practitioners who are interested in pursuing graduate degrees in education research. At the same time, more jobs should be created for trained researchers, especially university faculty positions in adult literacy and learning.

Finally, the limited research that has been done should be made readily available to researchers, policymakers, and practitioners. Literature reviews on particular topics and information in databases using government funds should be easily accessible. To facilitate the sharing of data, researchers should agree to common definitions and measures of important elements of literacy and literacy instruction.

Summary and Conclusion

The National Plan for Research and Development in Adult Education and Literacy includes contributions from every sector of the literacy field. Practitioners, administrators, policymakers, and researchers considered the field's research needs and how research findings could be utilized to improve teaching and learning. Their input helped organize the research to be done into five clear topics: adult learning, persistence, and recruitment; types of instruction; learner assessment and program evaluation; staff development; and policy and structure. The other research planning efforts conducted by DAEL's Working Group of State Adult Education Directors and the Center for Applied Linguistics also confirmed the importance of these topics.

The report strongly emphasizes the need to conduct research within the context of a comprehensive knowledge creation and utilization system. It points out the benefits of such a system for adult learners and the field. It also acknowledges that responsibility for creating a system lies with the adult literacy field itself, despite the difficult cultural and practical changes it will entail.

There is already some evidence of progress. Research underway at NCSALL and elsewhere will directly address some of the research questions described here. There are also several efforts to enhance dissemination of research to encourage changes in practice. For example, NCSALL is producing *Focus on Basics*, a quarterly publication dedicated to providing research-based solutions to instructional challenges in formats easily accessible to instructors. NIFL's *Bridges to Practice* and DAEL's ProNet project offer additional examples of conscious efforts to utilize research findings to affect what happens in classrooms.

The issues surrounding research in adult literacy have evolved. Even as recently as five years ago, there was uncertainty and even disagreement about which research topics deserved attention. Now, several efforts have identified the research to be done. There is general agreement that those topics are the right ones. So the real challenges before us are to ensure that research projects meet rigorous standards and take place in a broader system that strongly supports positive changes in practice.

APPENDIX A

Steering Group Members

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APPENDIX B

Focus Group Sites and Participants

Site 1—US-Mexico Border

Site 1 was the location for two focus groups, one with students and one with instructors. This large city on the US-Mexico border was selected primarily because many of its students represent a growing subset of the English as a Second Language population: adults who do not read and write in either English or their native language. In response to our request to talk with such students, the community college program we visited allowed us to meet with its entire Spanish literacy class. The group comprised 16 students, most of whom were women between the ages of 50 and 60. All were of Mexican heritage, but had lived in the U.S. for most of their adult lives. Most had lost a job in the past year due to the effects of the North American Free Trade Agreement, which caused the manufacturing plants where they worked to move their operations to Mexico.

In selecting instructors, program administrators look for "an individual who cares," and who understands students' culture. Most of the instructors who participated in the focus group were students at a nearby university. Although these staff members received training in use of the college's "five-step" instructional model, and support from "facilitators" who supervise and support their work, none had a formal background in education. The program's director believes that these instructors are, in general, far more successful with the college's literacy students than individuals with more traditional backgrounds in education might be.

Site 2—Regional Office of State Literacy Resource Center (SLRC)

Site 2, the regional office of a State Literacy Resource Center (SLRC), was the location for focus groups of instructors and local administrators. All of the participants at this site represented adult basic education programs serving the SLRC's city of about half a million and surrounding suburban areas. Most were employed by school districts (which have historically formed the basis of the state's service delivery system), although other types of agencies were also represented. Several of the programs represented enrolled significant numbers of adults participating in Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) programs.

Site 3—Community Center Outside Major Northeastern Metropolitan Area

Site 3, a community center just outside a major northeastern metropolitan area, was the location for focus groups of students and instructors. The agency emphasizes a participatory approach to literacy education that includes group decision-making by staff members, a team approach to instruction, and student involvement. It serves students from a community that includes a large number of Haitian and other immigrants, who together represent more than 70 language groups. Most of the adults who participated in the student focus group were working toward their GEDs or Adult Diplomas; a few were attending an advanced ESL class.

Several individuals who participated in the instructors' focus group were former participants in the center's GED or Adult Diploma programs. Reflecting the agency's emphasis on "lateral" staff development, which encourages instructors to become familiar with a number of subject areas, most had taught more than one type of class.

Site 4 – Annual Statewide Adult Education Conference

Because we believed that rural adult education service providers might face unique challenges in recruiting and serving adults who wanted to improve their literacy skills, we asked the director of adult education in a state that includes many rural areas to help us identify local administrators who represented such programs. These individuals assembled at Site 4, an annual statewide adult education conference. This state requires each school district to provide adult education services (either directly or through a contract with another LEA), and most participants represented programs that served either one large, or two or three smaller, LEAs. About two-thirds noted that their districts enrolled significant numbers of ESL students, who came to their areas to work at military bases, large industrial plants, or farms. Several of the agencies represented worked closely with major employers in their areas to improve the literacy skills of current or prospective employees.

Site 5 – Community College in Southeastern State

Site 5, a community college in a southeastern state that has historically relied primarily on these institutions to provide adult education services, hosted a focus group of adult education students. The college serves a rural area encompassing four counties, three of which have populations of about 40,000; the fourth has fewer than 20,000 inhabitants. Its main campus is located in the only city in the area that has a population of more than 10,000. The institution offers ABE, Adult High School, and GED classes at a variety of sites, including elementary schools, churches, and local textile mills where many eligible adults work. The students who participated in the focus group were from a single GED class and ranged in age from 18 to 60.

State Directors of Adult Education and SLRC Representatives assembled in Washington, DC, for a half-day session. Participants included: Mr. Robert Bickerton, State Director of Adult Education, Massachusetts; Mr. Garland Hankins, State Director of Adult Education, Arkansas; Ms. Miriam Kroeger, Director, Arizona Adult Literacy and Technology Resource Center; Ms. Mary Ann Jackson, ABE Consultant, Wisconsin Technical College System; Dr. Lennox McLendon, formerly State Director of Adult Education, Virginia; Dr. Gary Padak, Ohio Literacy Resource Center; Mr. Charles Talbert, former State Director of Adult Education, Maryland; Dr. Fran Tracy-Mumford, State Director of Adult Education, Delaware; Ms. Virginia Watson, Michigan State Literacy Resource Center. Dr. Andy Hartman, director of NIFL, also attended the meeting.

Researchers and policymakers from the eastern part of the country met for a half-day session in Washington, DC. Participants, who were identified by NIFL, were as follows: Dr. Judy Alamprese, Abt Associates Inc; Dr. Janet Baldwin, American Council on Education; Dr. Hal Beder, Rutgers University; Dr. John Comings, National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy; Dr. Sandra Furey, Planning and Evaluation Service, U.S. Department of Education; Dr. Andy Hartman, National Institute for Literacy; Dr. Harold Himmelfarb, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education; Dr. Chris Hopey,

National Center on Adult Literacy; Mr. Mark Kutner, American Institutes for Research; Ms. Melissa Oppenheimer, Planning and Evaluation Service, U.S. Department of Education; Mr. Ron Pugsley, Division of Adult Education and Literacy, U.S. Department of Education; Dr. John Strucker, National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy; and Ms. Carol Van Duzer, Center for Applied Linguistics.

Researchers from the western part of the country participated in a half-day session in Los Angeles, CA. Group members included: Dr. Robert Berdan, California State University at Long Beach; Dr. John Comings, National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy;[7] Dr. Alan Crawford; California State University at Los Angeles; Dr. Elisabeth Hayes, University of Wisconsin, Madison; Dr. Reynaldo Macias, Linguistic Minority Research Institute, University of California; Dr. Steve Reder, Portland State University; Dr. Ron Solórzano, Occidental College; Dr. Tom Sticht, Applied Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences; Dr. Gail Weinstein, San Francisco State University; Dr. Terrence Wiley, California State University at Long Beach, and Dr. Heide Spruck Wrigley, Aguirre International.

[7] Dr. Comings attended both the Washington, DC and Los Angeles sessions.

The National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) engages in a variety of capacity-building activities to support the development of high-quality state, regional, and national literacy services to ensure that all Americans can develop the basic skills necessary for success in the workplace, family, and community. The NIFL was created in 1991 by a bipartisan Congressional coalition in response to the literacy field's request for a federal office focused solely on literacy.

The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) is one of the national research centers supported by the U.S. Department of Education through the National Institute on Postsecondary Education, Libraries, and Lifelong Learning. NCSALL, through its basic and applied research efforts, seeks to improve the quality of practice in educational programs that serve adult learners. NCSALL builds partnerships between researchers and practitioners; disseminates research and best practices to practitioners, scholars, and policymakers; and works with the field to develop a comprehensive research plan.

The Office of Vocational and Adult Education in the U.S. Department of Education supports a wide range of programs and activities that help young people and adults obtain the knowledge and skills they need to be lifelong learners, successful in their chosen careers, and effective citizens.

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